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PERSIAN POTTERY BOWL FROM RHAGES
IXTH CENTURY

A Rhages pottery bowl, in the minds of those who know the general types, is a far cry from ancient Chinese ware. But it is of interest to note that there has been found at Samara, a town just across the present Persian border, southwest from Rhages, bits of Chinese pottery of the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) which were used by local potteries as sample pieces. Samara was destroyed in the ninth century, so we know that the samples were in use not later than that period.

With this in mind it is interesting to have in the Museum collections (The Worcester R. Warner Collection) a fine large bowl so closely resembling Chinese pottery of the T'ang Dynasty that it is often mistaken for it. This bowl was excavated at Rhages, and is undoubtedly Persian.

It has deep, slightly flaring sides following the line of a reverse curve, a straight foot and receding bottom, on which are two spur marks plainly visible. A third spur was probably used, if we can judge from the position of the other two; for they form two points of a regular triangle.

The soft buff-colored paste of which the body is made is mostly covered with an orange glaze, with here and there patches of green and yellow glaze, giving to the surface of the bowl a mottled effect, which, in Chinese pieces, is called by the Japanese the turtle back design.

Besides the decorative design made by the colored spots there is, on the inside of the bowl, an incised design of a running scroll on the side, and a spray pattern on the bottom. A line drawing of both is reproduced on the opposite page.

The differences between this Persian bowl and its Chinese prototype are noticeable in the first place because of the presence of the incised design and because the design itself is not Chinese in character. In the second place, the glaze is different. In Chinese pieces of this character the glaze is clearer and deeper, or thicker, and the crackle finer or more minute. The body paste is similar in hardness, but not as pink as most Chinese specimens of this period. The bowl has been broken into nearly forty pieces, but only in a few small sections has it been necessary to build up with new material.

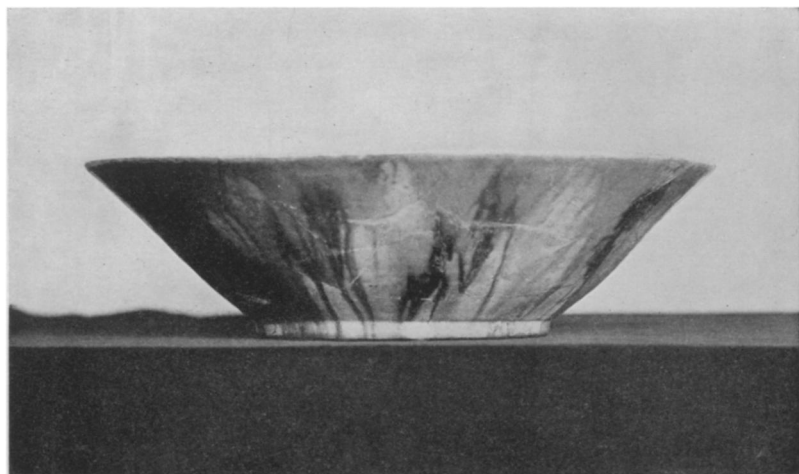
CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

We are fortunate indeed in having this beautiful and unique example which shows the close relation of Eastern nations in ancient times. It would seem that the piece is undoubtedly of Persian manufacture with strong Chinese influence. As such it is a rare and important specimen.

J.A.M.



Traced drawing of the incised border scroll and floral design of Persian pottery bowl from Rhages.



Persian Pottery Bowl
Rhages IXth Century
The Worcester R. Warner Collection

Size: $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter; $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches high; 7 inches across the bottom.